

Before the FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
Washington, DC 20554

In the Matter of 2002 Biennial Regulatory Review -
Review of the Commission's Broadcast Ownership Rules
and Other Rules Adopted Pursuant to Section 202
of the Telecommunications Act of 1996,
Notice of Proposed Rulemaking,
MM Docket No. 02-277, (rel. Sept. 23, 2002)

To: The Secretary, FCC Commissioners, and Chief, Media Bureau

I support public interest regulations that increase media diversity, and
am writing to you today in reply to the comments of Fox Entertainment
Group, et al, dated January 2, 2003, in the matter of the FCC's MM Docket
Nos 02-277, 01-235, 01-317, and 00-244

In their filing, Fox, et al, make the point that media ownership
regulations must be considered in today's current context, not the
environment of 1960. Fox, NBC and Viacom make much of the Internet's
role, claiming correctly that "The impact of the Internet on the media
marketplace, and, more specifically, the marketplace of ideas, cannot be
overstated." What these companies fail to mention are the ways that their
fellow mega-media brethren are working to tighten corporate control over
that medium.

The Internet's diversity of content has much to do with its current "open
access" nature. Unfortunately, as the general shift from dial-up to
broadband Internet access gets underway, steps are being taken that
threaten to slam the door shut on open access. Already, the FCC decided
to characterize high-speed cable Internet connections as an "information
service" rather than a "telecommunications service." This designation
frees cable broadband from many telecom rules, giving most cable companies
near-complete say over which ISPs beyond themselves, if any, will be
allowed to provide Internet access over their cable lines. Cable itself
is a monopoly in most towns; so anyone who signs up for cable Internet
will typically have no other choice than to use the cable company's own
ISP.

Naturally, the telephone industry has cried foul, arguing it is unfair for
the FCC to allow cable Internet services to be monopolies while
phone-based Internet services are forced to remain open. So now pressure
is being applied to have DSL designated as an "information service," too.
The effect of this would mean if consumers chose to sign up for DSL
service, they wouldn't get to choose between different ISPs without their
phone company's okay. It's likely that in many areas, there would be only
one DSL service provider -- the regional phone monopoly. Internet
diversity is sure to suffer if this occurs.

What diversity does exist on the Internet -- and on television stations,
radio stations, in newspapers and so on -- exists in part thanks to public
interest regulations that have prevented this type of gross,
market-specific monopolization. What's more, I would add that the
Internet is not enough. I would like to see the same diversity of ideas,
popular and unpopular, that is, for the time being, on the World Wide Web
on my local television and radio stations, and in my city's daily
newspapers.

The increase in consumers' access to varied forms of media between 1960 and 2002, mentioned by Fox, et al, has a lot to do with media ownership rules that were already on the books. As a citizen of this country, I strongly encourage you to strengthen, not dismantle, media ownership regulations.

Respectfully,

Arthur Stamoulis